



## Housatonic Valley Association

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To: Chairmen Senator Paul Formica, Senator Catherine Osten and Representative Toni Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee

From: Lynn Werner, Executive Director, Housatonic Valley Association (HVA)

Date: February 16, 2017

Re: **H.B. No. 7027, AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2019, and Making Appropriations Therefore**

The Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) is among the oldest successful watershed conservation organizations in the nation. We work on behalf of more than 3,000 across 55 Connecticut towns.

We write to express our **strongest possible opposition to the proposed elimination of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).**

We urgently request that you restore funding for CEQ. In exchange for the tiny investment of \$174,000 annually, CEQ provides a vast and invaluable return to the citizens and public officials of Connecticut. The existence of CEQ saves the state many more times its cost in litigation, staff time, legislator's time, and consultant fees. It makes no financial sense to eliminate CEQ.

CEQ provides the only annual report on the state of our environment and it does so fairly and objectively. With thoughtful and comprehensive research, CEQ also produces unbiased, science-based reports and recommendations on the most pressing environmental issues of our time. Organizations like HVA, state agencies, the private sector, legislators and many other stakeholders rely on these reports to make informed decisions on policies and actions. CEQ also offers citizens a fair hearing and a place for resolution on environmental concerns and complaints. CEQ is the only place where citizens can seek common-sense solutions, without litigation.

In the face of unprecedented cuts within the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection that threaten the agency's ability to serve the public, and the unprecedented silencing of the federal Environmental Protection Agency, CEQ is needed more than ever. Gutting the few dollars CEQ requires at a time when it is needed most is enormously short-sighted and fiscally counter-productive.

We strongly urge you to reinstate funding for CEQ.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.